

VZCZCXYZ0006  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGB #0147/01 0210729  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH(CCY AD4F9793 MSI0147-695)  
R 210729Z JAN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5280

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000147

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y DELETING INFO ADDEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2018

TAGS: PHUM KDEM KJUS PGOV PINS I2

SUBJECT: MOLSA MINISTER ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IMPROVING JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Classified By: PolCouns Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a January 13 meeting, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs expressed his enthusiasm for USG support for alleviating the overcrowded conditions of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, (MOLSA) juvenile facilities. He discussed near-term solutions such as removing squatters from a MOLSA building in 7 Nissan, expanding Tobschi juvenile detention facility, and adding beds to another facility; but noted that these solutions were insufficient and welcomed the USD 3.5 million that the USG is offering to build a new juvenile detention facility. However, MOLSA has still not come up with a location on which to build the new facility. The Minister also welcomed the idea of having a USG advisor attached to the Ministry. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Mahmud Muhammad Jawad al-Radi met with Baghdad PRTOffs and EmbOffs on January 13 to discuss ways to improve the juvenile justice system and areas of cooperation between the USG and the Ministry. This was al-Radi's first meeting with Embassy officials since he had refused to meet with Embassy officers after a June 2007 orphanage scandal in which an embedded CBS reporter covered the Iraqi Army and U.S. military's joint rescue of 24 naked and emaciated orphans tied to their beds in a Baghdad facility, which prompted a hostile reaction from MOLSA. Dr. Rijadh Glassou, Director General of juvenile vocational training; Faris Sami, Director General of juveniles; and Khadum Raov, the director of juvenile education were also present.

¶3. (C) The Minister acknowledged that there is an overcrowding problem in MOLSA's juvenile facilities and welcomed any help from the USG in solving this problem. (Note: The two Baghdad-area MOLSA juvenile facilities are currently about 250 juveniles over capacity. In addition, there are 70 convicted juveniles who remain in Coalition facilities because there is no space in Iraqi juvenile facilities. End Note.) Al-Radi said that the Ministry has its own funding and is adding 70-80 beds in an existing facility and has plans to expand Tobschi juvenile facility to include rooms for education and training. He commented, however, that this is not enough to solve the problem, and the long-term solution requires new buildings.

¶4. (C) The Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC) has approved a \$3.5 million proposal from Baghdad PRT to build a new juvenile facility in Baghdad. (Note: The funds were approved six months ago, before the Embassy and MNF-I decided they were getting out of the prison construction business. End Note.) However, the facility will require an empty five-acre plot of land, and so far the Ministry has been unable to produce such a plot. Once land has been designated for the project, it will take 18 months to complete. When reminded that the money for this project would not be available indefinitely, the Minister said he

would send a letter on January 15 that identified an appropriate location. Other Ministry officials present said they have identified a 13,000 square meter plot in 7 Nissan. (Note: 13,000 square meters is less than five acres. The Ministry did not present the promised letter on January 15, and has been given a one-week ultimatum. End Note.)

¶15. (C) The Minister discussed an existing MOLSA facility in 9 Nissan as one possible near-term solution to the problem of overcrowding in juvenile facilities. He described this as a large building in good condition, but said there are reportedly 50-52 families squatting in the building. The Minister was adamant that these families should not be forced out, which would exacerbate internal displacement; but instead argued for negotiations and reparations. The Ministry has already had unsuccessful negotiations with the families and has offered up to \$2,000 per family in compensation for moving, but the families will not negotiate further if the Ministry does not offer them a new place to live. The Minister has set up a commission to talk to the families and has given his Ministry two weeks to solve the problem. He noted that it might be politically difficult to move the families because most are affiliated with the Sadrists party, and said he had ended up asking the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) for assistance in pressuring the families to move.

¶16. (C) PRTOff suggested establishing greater U.S. cooperation with the Ministry by placing a USG advisor in the Ministry. The Minister welcomed this suggestion and said he would write a letter to the Ambassador about it, adding that the cooperation should focus on vocational training since 2008 is the &Year of Vocational Training8 in the Ministry. He stressed the Ministry would fully cooperate with the U.S. in the future.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: Overcrowding is a serious problem in the juvenile facilities and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. MOLSA's eagerness to work closely with the USG is a good sign, and the issue of juvenile justice facility overcrowding is a potential point of entry for greater cooperation, which could include appointment of a USG advisor to MOLSA. While the Minister seems enthusiastic about the USG funding for his new building project, the fact that he has so far been unable to provide a suitable plot of land does not bode well for that project. However, the Minister seemed genuine in his desire to provide more and better facilities and programs for juveniles in detention, and the USG should work closely with MOLSA in improving the juvenile system. END COMMENT.  
CROCKER